

Veterans Bulletin

Georgia Department of Veterans Service

Sonny Perdue
Governor

Pete Wheeler
Commissioner

Georgia Veterans...guardians of liberty
Summer 2006

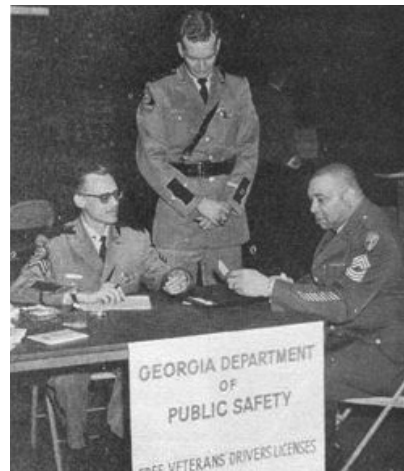
40 Years of "Supermarkets" Then and Now...



Columbus, January 1966

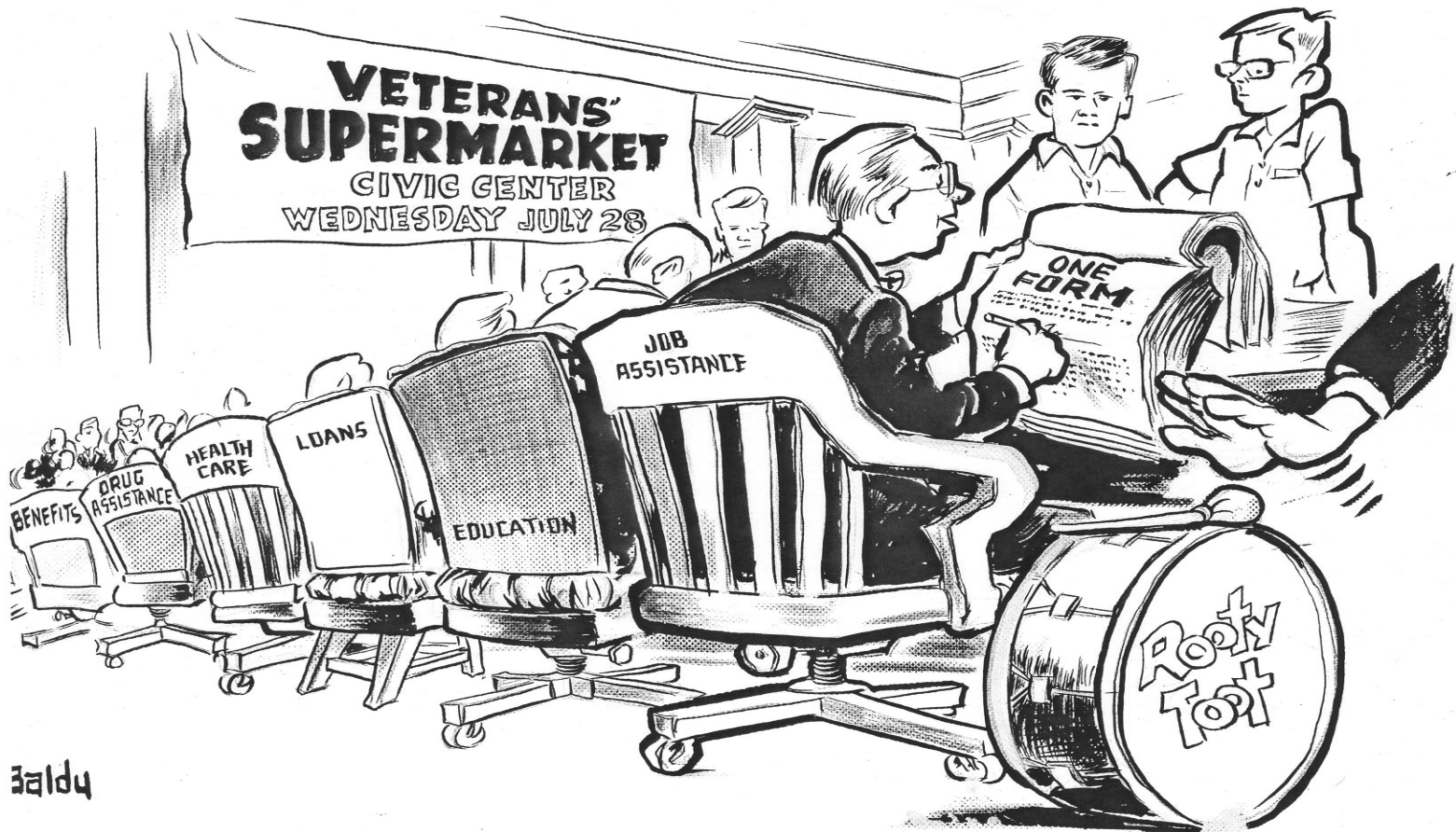


Augusta, September 1966



Savannah, December 2005





"...YOU'RE ENTITLED TO SOMETHING MORE SUBSTANTIAL!"



"...DON'T JUST SIT THERE. DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!"

History of “Supermarket” of Veterans Benefits

The idea for taking veterans’ benefits information “to the people” originated in late 1965 when it became apparent that many veterans, widows, widowers and family members in the Columbus area who needed information on VA benefits were unaware of what benefits were available.

First, consideration was given to locating several claims counselors from the Georgia Department of Veterans Service at a central point in Columbus to answer questions posed by veterans and their families. It was quickly concluded that information about other benefits other than just VA benefit was needed. It was decided to involve every state, federal and local agency which had any dealings whatsoever with the veteran population and bring them together under one roof to provide a central point for information and service.

The objective was to place experts in one location so a veteran could get what he needed, and then get whatever assistance was required to actually file claims.

In addition to the Department of Veterans Service and what was then the Veterans Administration, 18 other governmental agencies charged with administering programs directly or indirectly related to veterans’ affairs had representatives present.

In January of 1966, with the generous cooperation of the Columbus area news media and

City officials, the first one-day counseling service for veterans, widows, widowers and family members ever held in the United States was conducted with astounding success.

Over 5,000 persons made inquiries during the nine-

Supermarket Sites

Albany
1970, 1976, 1982, 1993 and 2003
Atlanta
1971
Athens
1989
Augusta
1966, 1975 and 1987
Brunswick
1999
Columbus
1966, 1972, 1978 and 1991
Dalton
1981, 1994 and 2000
Gainesville
1979, 1986 and 1997
Griffin
1996 and 2004
Macon
1969, 1973, 1988 and 1998
Rome
1967, 1977 and 1985
Savannah
1968, 1974, 1983, 1992 and 2005
Valdosta
1984, 1995 and 2002
Waycross
1980 and 1990

hour period. Those attending ranged from a 90-year-old Spanish War widow to the teenage widow of an American killed in Vietnam.

Over 4,000 claims were filed on the spot during that first “Supermarket”.

A few months later another “Supermarket” was held in Augusta.

Again, excellent news

media participation and cooperation by city officials netted gratifying results. Over 4,000 inquiries were made. By this time, Washington officials had received word on how Georgia was assisting its veterans and were on hand to observe the Augusta event.

Since that first “Supermarket” in Columbus and the second one in Augusta, the Georgia Department of Veterans Service has staged phenomenally successful programs in Rome, Savannah, Macon, Albany, Atlanta, Gainesville, Dalton, Valdosta, Waycross, Griffin and Brunswick.

The department frequently receives inquiries from other states on how to conduct such programs. And several states, following the format developed by the Georgia Department of Veterans Service, have staged successful programs of their own.

Experience from these one-day counseling sessions has clearly demonstrated that there are many veterans, widows, widowers, and family dependents who do not know what benefits they are entitled for having served their country in a time of need.

Through these annual “Supermarket” programs, the Georgia Department of Veterans Service, in cooperation with all the participating State Federal, and local agencies, augments its program of informing Georgia veterans.

Georgia National Cemetery Officially Opens

VA Secretary Reaffirms Commitment to “National Shrines”

VA News Release
June, 2006

On June 4, the Georgia National Cemetery officially became the nation's 123rd veterans' cemetery during a ceremony attended by Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson, and Commissioner Pete Wheeler.

“Our cemeteries are national shrines to the sacrifice and valor of the men and women who have served this nation in uniform,” said Secretary Nicholson, “It is a sacred obligation and an honor for the Department of Veterans Affairs to preserve our national cemeteries as lasting tributes to our service members and veterans.”

The 775-acre site is in Cherokee County, approximately 40 miles north of Atlanta, along state Route 20, west of Canton. Nearly 400,000 veterans and their families live within the service area of the national cemetery.

The land for the cemetery was donated to VA by Scott Hudgens, the late Atlanta World War II veteran, land developer and philanthropist.

Burials began in April on approximately 50 acres, which includes one committal shelter and four burial sections. These sections have capacity for 8,119 full-casket gravesites, consisting of 5,923 sites with pre-placed crypts and 2,196 standard gravesites, as well as 3,129 in-ground cremation gravesites.

The complete 110-acre phase-one construction project calls for 17,200 full-casket gravesites — 12,000 with pre-placed crypts — and a 3,000-unit columbarium, 765



“Mr. Scott Hudgens was a great American. He landed at Normandy on D-Day. After World War II, he returned to Georgia and became a very successful businessman. Several years ago, Mr. Hudgens visited my office and shared with me and others a story of vision he had while recently visiting the beautiful cemetery at Normandy on the coast of France. He had returned to Normandy to visit the graves of many close friends who were killed when they landed together on D-Day, June 6, 1944. He told us that while standing at the cemetery which overlooks the English channel, he had a vision that the 775 acres of land he owned which overlooked Lake Altoona should be a National Cemetery similar to the cemetery at Normandy.”

in-ground burial sites and a scattering garden for cremated remains.

The plan also includes construction of two more committal shelters, a public information center with electronic gravesite locator and public restrooms, a cemetery entrance area, flag assembly area, a memorial walkway, a donations area, and infrastructure elements including roadways, landscaping, utilities and irrigation. Phase-one construction is scheduled for completion in July 2007.

Veterans with a discharge other than

dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a national cemetery.

With the addition of the Georgia facility, VA now operates 123 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, plus 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than three million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict — from the Revolutionary War to the Global War on Terror — are buried in VA's national cemeteries on more than 16,000 acres of land.

For additional information about VA burial benefits go to <http://www.cem.va.gov> or call the VA regional offices toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.

For information on the Georgia National Cemetery, call the cemetery office at (866) 236-8159.



Above, gathering after the dedication ceremony with Commissioner Pete Wheeler are Mrs. Jacqueline Hudgens, widow of the late Mr. Scott Hudgens with grandson Cole Hudgens, (at her right), and VA Secretary R. James Nicholson.



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Honor Their Service



Fulfill Their Trust



National POW/MIA Recognition Day
September 15, 2006

T. Nielsen 5/06

Kids Thank a Veteran Website

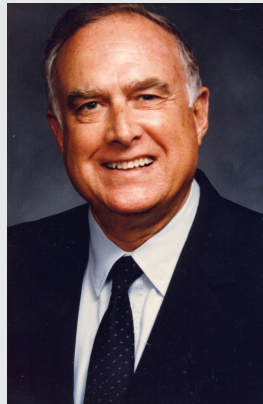
Cherie Reid, a teacher in Howell, New Jersey, has created a website called "Kids Thank a Veteran" at www.kidsthankavet.com, in hopes that it will eventually spread across the United States to all children.

The website's primary purpose is to have children thank a veteran for serving. Any child will be able to visit the website and register their first name and the state they live in, which will also assist Ms. Reid with keeping a national tally.

Ms. Reid hopes the simple gesture of saying "thank you for serving" will cause children to become aware of our veterans and the important part they have played in securing our American freedoms, and hopefully, these children will continue this practice throughout their lives.

The secondary purpose of the site is education, with

Commissioner's Veterans Day Message



This Veterans Day we honor the long line of men and women who have served in our United States Army Forces. More than half of the 48 million veterans who have served since the Revolutionary War are with us today. They range from a few World War I veterans, all more than 100 years old, to our veterans of "tomorrow" who are presently serving in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

The United States of America remains a free and strong nation because of their willingness to fulfill citizenship's highest responsibility- military service. They endured the price exacted upon this nation in its historic role as world leader and champion of democracy. Because of their military service, they have help make the country we live in possible. They have done this at the risk of their own comfort, safety and future.

We in the Georgia Department of Veterans Service would like to thank Georgia's approximately 760,000 veterans and their dependents.

information on variety of topics which include:

- What is a veteran;
- Information on veteran holidays and military awards;
- Our American flag, as well as the POW/MIA flag;
- Military services and academics;
- Groups that help veterans;
- Women in the military;
- Those who have sacrificed;
- Memorial and cemeteries;
- Teacher activities, including songs, puzzles, etc.;

- Patriotic crafts;
- Children's book suggestions;
- A veteran's photo page.

This site is strictly for educational purposes and will be closely monitored so it will be a safe site for children to visit. All picture and comments submitted will first be monitored to ensure all postings are appropriate. For questions contact Cherie Reid at (732) 349-6394

The Georgia Department of Veterans Service
Cordially invites you to attend the
"Governor's Veterans' Day Proclamation Signing"
Wednesday, 11 a.m., October 25, 2006
State Capital Rotunda
Atlanta

Veterans Day 2006 is Saturday, November 11

IN HONOR OF ALL WHO SERVED

Veterans Day should be a day of celebration, recognition, and dedication.

It is on this day that all Americans should **celebrate** the blessings of liberty secured by more than 48 million of our countrymen and women in uniform, who for 226 years, symbolize the very best of humanity in America's unrelenting mission to vanquish the very worst of evil.

It is on this day we **recognize** our Nation's 25 million living veterans who represent nearly a century of selfless sacrifices in assuring our American way of life and all that is right and just.

It is on this day we **dedicate** ourselves to supporting the men and women of our active-duty Armed Forces, as they stand tall and unrelenting before the onrushing winds of tyranny.

At the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month, Americans should reflect on that same hour, day, and month in 1918 when the guns fell silent across the battlefields of the "War to End All Wars."

But four more generations of America's citizen-soldiers would be sent to foreign lands to fend off tyranny's onslaught.

From the Meuse-Argonne to Normandy, Pork Chop Hill to Khe Sahn, and from Kuwait to Mogadishu to Baghdad, American veterans have not shrunk from battle; they have not yielded to fear; they have not

abandoned their cause. They earned the title "veteran."

It is a title endowed by a grateful nation upon citizens whose shoulders were broad



enough to carry the weight of our common defense. It is a title that speaks of courage and sacrifice in the face of mortal danger. It is a title that speaks of compassion and heartbreak in the wake of a terrible battle. And it is a title that speaks of faith and humility when it is time to come home.

On Veterans Day, all Americans should celebrate their lives and their contributions to the foundation of the American experience. We recognize the courage of America's veterans...courage passed down across generations...courage that inspires our soldiers, sailors,

airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen to bring today's alchemists of evil to justice.

In peacetime and in war, America's veterans held fast to the principles our founders burnished on the soul of a new nation 226 years ago. Let us, therefore, dedicate ourselves to honor them – and keep them in our hearts always.

By their example of courage under fire, they lifted up our nation; a nation inspired by the dignity of the common man...a nation blessed with heroes and heroes dreams.

Let us be lifted up by the spirit of sacrifice that ennobled America's veterans in their times of testing, and let us never forget the lessons of liberty by these citizen-soldiers.

Let us learn anew to celebrate the gift of freedom our veterans so selflessly secured. Let us learn to clearly recognize their sacrifices. And let us learn how to better dedicate our lives to do justice to their military service.

It is right and good that we do so, not just today, but every day that the light of liberty shines down on our great Nation.

May God bless our veterans...and may God bless the United States of America.

While Addressing This Year's VSO State Conventions Commissioner Urges Effort to Retain Fort Gillem PX/Commissary

In his remarks to Veterans Service Organizations during their state conventions in June, Georgia Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Pete Wheeler issued a "call for action" to conference attendees.

While speaking at the opening ceremonies of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and AMVETS annual department level conventions, Commissioner Wheeler urged their membership to get involved in a grassroots effort in support of maintaining current commissary and exchange operations at Fort Gillem, earmarked to be closed under the Defense Department's Base Realignment and Closure.

The Commissioner informed the organizations that Governor Sonny Perdue and Georgia Senators Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson, had sent a letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld requesting the retention of these facilities.

"We strongly urge this organization to adopt a resolution that will support maintaining the commissary and exchange," Commissioner Wheeler encouraged convention delegates. "We also urge each of you and every member of you Post and Auxiliary to write letters to members of Georgia's congressional delegation letting them know of your strong support to maintain the commissary and exchange."

Four of Georgia's current 13 military bases are scheduled to close under BRAC.

"The closure of Forts Gillem and McPherson will leave more than

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MOPH, Columbus, June 17

100,000 retired military personnel, National Guardsmen, reservists, and their family members with no commissary and major Army-Air Force Exchange system within 100 miles," Wheeler commented. "An excellent opportunity exists for the Department of Defense to continue its support to personnel of all components by retaining

the current commissary and post-exchange operations at Fort Gillem."

Commissioner Wheeler pointed out two precedents, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana and Fort Ord, California. The commissary and exchange operations at both realigned facilities remain open to support local reserve component personnel, retired military, and their families.

"These commissaries and exchanges continue to thrive," said Commissioner Wheeler. "In fact at the former Fort Ben Harrison, Congress recently appropriated \$2 million for renovations."

Commissioner Wheeler pointed out current annual commissary and exchange sales at BRAC targeted facilities exceed \$45 million, "figures that will be easy to maintain even with active duty personnel transfers.

Along with recognizing their organization's contribution to programs promoting patriotism and assisting military servicemembers, veterans and their families,



VFW, Macon, June 9



AMVETS, Valdosta, June 3

Commissioner Wheeler's remarks also included other topics of interest affecting Georgia veterans, to include:

- the recently dedicated VA's Georgia National Cemetery in Cherokee County near Canton and the progress of ongoing plans to begin construction of



DAV, Macon, June 28

Georgia's second veterans cemetery in Glennville;

- Department's support during the outprocessing/demobilization of Georgia's Army National Guard's 48th Infantry Brigade return from Operation Iraq

Freedom; and

- the progress of VA's construction plans of the covered walkway connecting the Atlanta VA Regional Office Building and the Atlanta VA Hospital in Decatur.



American Legion, Macon, June 23

FBI says...Files Uncompromised

Stolen VA Computer Equipment Recovered

On Thursday, June 29, 2006 VA Secretary R. James Nicholson announced that law enforcement authorities recovered the laptop and external hard drive stolen in early May from a VA employee's home, in Maryland.

The FBI indicated to VA that it has a high degree of confidence, based on the results of the forensic tests and other information gathered during the investigation, that the sensitive files were not accessed or compromised.

Still protecting veterans' private information remains a priority for VA. Out of an abundance of caution, and to further safeguard individuals' information, VA will work swiftly to solicit bids from

companies that provide data breach analysis. Data breach analysis looks across multiple industries to detect patterns of misuse related to a specific data loss. While it is considered highly unlikely by the FBI and law enforcement that this data was accessed, data breach analysis will provide additional assurances. VA has funds in its budget that can be used for this purpose, and there will be no reduction in the quality of health care and other services provided to veterans as a result of this expense.

Secretary Nicholson issued a directive delegating new security responsibilities to the VA's Assistant Secretary for Information Technology. That

person is now responsible for fully implementing strict guidelines on VA data and enforcing quick disciplinary action when any security failures are detected.

VA continues to operate a call center that people can contact to get more information as it becomes available. That toll free number is 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636).

Subcontractor Notifies VA of Missing Computer with Vet Files *VA, Law Enforcement Authorities Investigating*

In early August, a subcontractor, hired to assist in insurance collections for VA's medical centers in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, informed the Department that a desktop computer containing personal information on some veterans is missing from the company's offices.

VA was notified by the subcontractor, Unisys Corporation, that the computer was missing from its Reston, Va., offices. VA immediately dispatched a team to Unisys to assist in the search for the missing computer and to help determine the precise nature of the information it may have contained.

VA believes the records involved are limited to people who received treatment at the two Pennsylvania medical centers during the past four years. It is believed the desktop computer may have contained patients' names, addresses, Social Security Numbers, dates of birth, insurance carriers and billing information, dates of military service, and claims data that may include some medical information.

Upon learning the computer was missing, VA personnel took immediate steps to notify the appropriate senior VA leadership, the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security's Computer Emergency Response Team.

During the past two years, with the help of The American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the Georgia Department of Veterans Service has made great strides in getting every member of our field offices TRIP trained.

TRIP stands for Training, Responsibility, Involvement and Preparation of Claims (TRIP). The goal of TRIP is to enhance service to claimants by combining resources and focusing on shared concerns. To achieve this objective, Veteran Service Officers who are TRIP trained are allowed access to VA's computer systems up to the point the claim is adjudicated.

Taking part in a yearly TRIP training are below, from left to right: front row – Melissa Ingle of Americus; Janice Callaway of Washington; Joyce Boyd of Valdosta; Beverly Lloyd of Augusta; Janice Ann Ellers of Lyons; Vivian Howard of Milledgeville; second row – Melanie Kay-Lamb of Milledgeville; April Welter of Moultrie; Alison DiFiore of Swainsboro; Sherri Cathcart of Albany; Larry Price of Thomasville; Joshua Dixon of Macon; back row - Instructor Nelson Cruthers of VARO Atlanta; Mike Bates of Warner Robins; Lenora Evans of Atlanta; Fred Daniels of Atlanta VAMC; Douglas Cook of Athens; Joel Willis of Carrollton; and Mike Powell of Cartersville.



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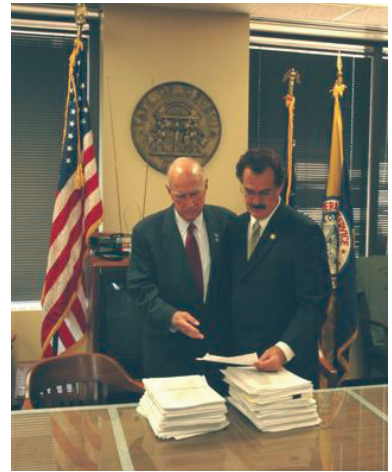


The Atlanta VA Medical Center has opened a new outpatient clinic in East Point in partnership with Morehouse School of Medicine. The clinic, which will provide primary care and mental health services to about 8,000 veterans, will be the largest of four VA outpatient clinics in metro Atlanta.

It also marks the beginning of an expansion of veterans' health care in Georgia, as the VA seeks to reach more local veterans and faces the challenge of caring for more new veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The new outpatient clinic could be the first of several new facilities in Georgia. The VA will add a new clinic in Athens in October and plans to also add another in Stockbridge pending federal funding.

The VA has 800 outpatient clinics around the country, including nine in Georgia. The clinics serve veterans in their local communities to prevent patients from having to travel to one of only three VA hospitals Georgia.



Commissioner Wheeler and Congressman Phil Gingrey of Georgia's 11th District review a stack of the several thousands petitions from Northwest Georgia veterans seeking to bring VA healthcare closer to the veterans of Floyd and surrounding counties. The Commissioner and the Congressman, in agreement, met recently to discuss the possibility of a meeting with VA Secretary Jim Nicholson about the serious need of a VA Outpatient Clinic in Rome.

“Kilroy” ... The Legend Lives

There was one “GI” who led or participated in every combat, training or occupation operation since World War II. This person could always be depended upon. He was one who got there first or who was always there after everyone else was gone. We’re referring, of course, to “Kilroy.” Somehow, this simple graffiti captured the imagination of GI’s worldwide. “Kilroy,” became known as the “Super GI” who always managed to show up any where GI’s went. It became a challenge to place the logo in the most unlikely places. The tradition continued in every US military theater of operations throughout and following World War II.



The legend of “Kilroy” has appeared at the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. Our nation’s “Super GI” has landed at the backside of the Memorial. It was brought to Commissioner Wheeler’s attention by a veteran from Georgia who recently visited the Memorial. “It is a pleasant surprise to find out “Kilroy” has become part of our country’s greatest monument honoring all involved with World War II,” said Commissioner Wheeler, who served as Chairman of the National WWII Memorial Advisory Board.



Military & Veterans Special License Plates

If you serve or have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, you can show your patriotism by displaying a military or veterans plate.

Disabled Veterans, Purple Heart and Georgia National Guard are just a few of the many special license plates available to eligible veterans and their survivors for personal use on their vehicle.



Chosin Reservoir Campaign of 1950 in North Korea
Desert Storm Air Force
Desert Storm Army
Desert Storm Coast Guard
Desert Storm Navy
Desert Storm U.S. Marine
Disabled Veteran (Free) Service Connected
Disabled Veteran Motorcycle (Free) Service Connected
Family Member Serving
Former Prisoner of War
Global War on Terrorism & Iraqi Freedom
Global War on Terrorism & Operating Enduring Freedom
Honoring All Veterans
Korean War Coast Guard
Korean War Navy
Korean War U.S. Marine
Korean War Air Force
Korean War Army
National Guard
Pearl Harbor Survivor
Purple Heart Recipient License Plate (Passenger Vehicle)

Reserve
Reserve Air Force
Reserve Army
Reserve Coast Guard
Reserve Marine
Reserve Navy
Retired Air Force
Retired Army
Retired Coast Guard
Retired Marine
Retired Navy
Support Georgia Troops
Vietnam Air Force
Vietnam Army
Vietnam Coast Guard
Vietnam Marine
Vietnam Navy
World War II Army
World War II Coast Guard
World War II Marine
World War II Navy

In some cases, the applicant must meet certain eligibility requirements. For further information, visit the Georgia Department of Revenue website at <http://motor.etax.dor.ga.gov/motor/plates>.

Veterans Housing and Benefits Bill signed into Law

Legislation to help servicemembers and veterans with their housing and other benefit needs was signed into law on Thursday, June 15th by President George W. Bush.

The "Veterans' Housing Opportunity and Benefits Act of 2006" was adopted with unanimous support in both the House and Senate.

Among its many provisions is one authorizing the VA to make grants available to assist with housing adaptations at a family member's home in which a severely disabled servicemember is temporarily residing. The grants range from between \$2,000 and \$14,000.

The legislation will also allow servicemembers, those who have been legally determined to be totally disabled at the time of their separation from the military, to have up to two years from their separation date to apply for premium-free Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, or an individual plan or policy, during the same two-year period.

SUPERMARKET OF VETERANS BENEFITS

2006



I OWE YOU!
It's part of our deal!

Thursday, December 7, 2006
10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

at the
Georgia National Guard Armory
88 Milledge Road
Augusta, Georgia



Get Your Questions Answered by Veterans Benefits Experts!!

- ◆ Establish eligibility for state veterans benefits
- ◆ Apply for VA health care benefits, disability compensation or pension
- ◆ Get help in obtaining military medals and records
- ◆ Find out about education and job training grants
- ◆ Find out about employment opportunities
- ◆ Get information on home mortgage and small business loans
- ◆ Find out about nursing home care and aging services
- ◆ Get information on burial in veterans cemeteries
- ◆ Get military retiree information
- ◆ Find out about veterans driver's license and car tags

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